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Young Men's Christian Association of Montreal

For release at will.
Approximately 340 words.

MISDIRECTED IDEALISM
COMPLICATING PROBLEM

No matter how strong and sincere one's desire to serve may be, it is by itself not enough when working with people.

"To make things worse, even the highest ideals and warmest concern can be misdirected so they will backfire and compound existing difficulties," warns A. Ross Seaman of the Montreal YMCA.

Mr. Seaman, a veteran youth worker and a member of the Y's Metropolitan Program & Field Services staff, suggests that the new problems thus created are often more serious than those which nurtured them.

"People--especially youth--tend to either give up or lash out blindly when their efforts to help effect needed change are unacknowledged, misunderstood or dismissed lightly," he emphasizes.

"Rebuffed by seeming indifference, impatient with adult society's apparent lack of humanity, alienated by an ostensible disposition towards impersonalization--some of them turn to anarchy as an alternative."

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The rising incidence of violence, together with the spreading rejection of adult values, have made it clear society is at an important crossroads.

"We can't pass laws to make the problems disappear," says Mr. Seaman. "They are real, they are complex and they are here now."

Unfortunately, some adults have been so angered by acts of destruction and indifference that they seem to have resigned themselves to just sit back and hope. Many seem to think that young people are either destructive militants or passive apathists.

"They overlook the many thousands of teenagers and young adults, in schools and otherwise, who are looking for constructive ways to participate in change," deplores the YMCA worker.

He emphasized that this group is in its way also militant. It too demands change, attacks injustice and insists on being heard. But it rejects anarchy and wants to rebuild, instead of destroy.

"Part of our job is to join the idealism and energy of these young people with the experience and resources of adults in a concerted effort to get at the root sources of dissent," says Mr. Seaman.

"In doing so, we hope to win support from the so-called apathists. While usually less ready or able to express themselves than

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either the 'destructivists' or 'constructivists', we do know for sure that many of them are desperately anxious to get involved."

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March 31, 1969.

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